THE PHANTOM™
GHOST WHO WALKS
#9
MOONSTONE™
$3.99
cover A
Mike Bullock
Silvestre Szilagyi

THE PHANTOM™

GHOST WHO WALKS

created by LEE FALK

For those who came in late...

NEARLY 500 YEARS AGO ON A REMOTE BANGALLAN BEACH, ONLY ONE SURVIVED A VICIOUS PIRATE ATTACK.
THE FIRST PHANTOM SWORE A SACRED OATH ON THE SKULL OF HIS FATHER'S KILLER.
WILL DEVOTE MY LIFE TO THE DESTRUCTION OF PIRACY, GREED, CRUELTY AND INJUSTICE!
GENERATION AFTER GENERATION FOLLOWED, BUT TO THE OUTSIDE WORLD, HE WAS ALWAYS ONE MAN... IMMORTAL.
NOW THE 21ST PHANTOM HAUNTS THE NIGHTMARES OF EVIL MEN EVERYWHERE.

"GODFALL" part two

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SPECIAL THANKS TO
OUR PHANTOM CONSULTANT
ED RHOADES

AND TO **KAREN MOY**
AT KING FEATURES

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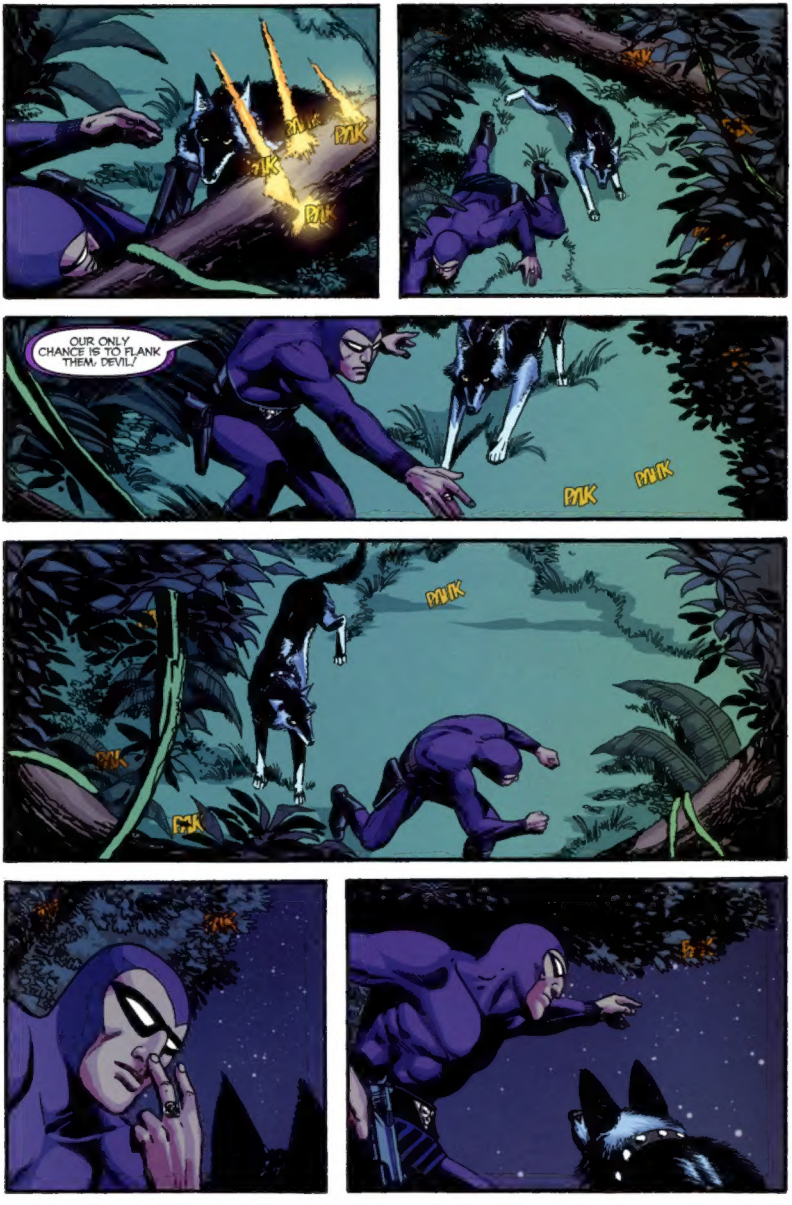
DEEP IN THE JUNGLES OF EASTERN BANGALLA.
BNUK
BNUK
BNUK
BNUK
BNUK
BNUK


PAK
PAK
PAK
PAK
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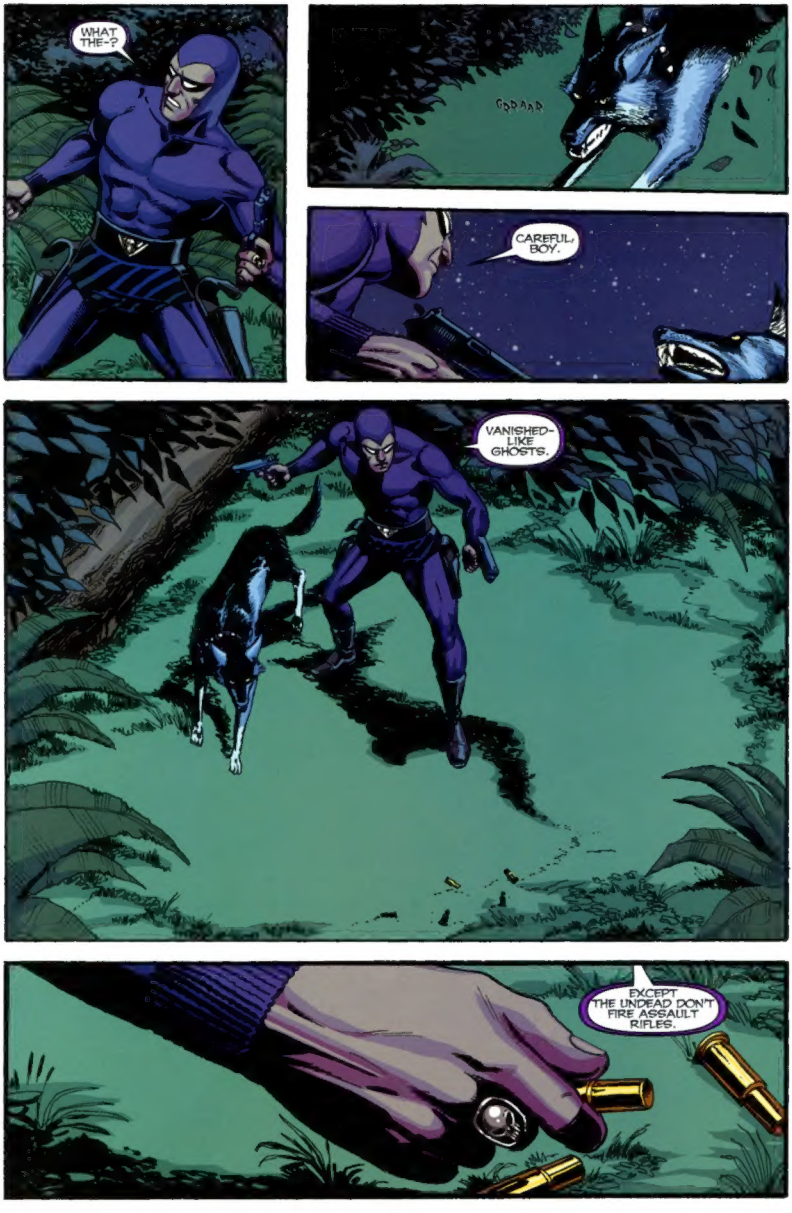
PAK
PAK
OUR ONLY CHANCE IS TO FLANK THEM, DEVIL!
PAK
PAK
PAK
PAK
PAK

RAAAHHHH!


WHAT THE-?
GRRAAR
CAREFUL, BOY.
VANISHED- LIKE GHOSTS.
EXCEPT THE UNDEAD DON'T FIRE ASSAULT RIFLES.

DID WORD OF THE CHILDREN REACH YOU, GHOST WHO WALKS?
I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND HOW YOU CAN ALWAYS TELL WHEN I'M COMING...
THE WEIGHT OF YOUR BURDEN SHAKES THE VERY ROOTS OF THE JUNGLE, PHANTOM.
WHERE DID YOU LAST SEE KIT AND HELOISE?
YOUNG KIT HAD TAKEN SOMETHING FROM MISS HELOISE, APPARENTLY TO TEASE HER. SHE CHASED HIM INTO THE WOODS AND...
AND-
WE- I FAILED YOU, PHANTOM.
THIS ISN'T THE TIME FOR BLAME, GURAN. HAVE YOU SPOKEN WITH DIANA?
NO...
MS. PALMER-WALKER, PLEASE.
"KIDNAPPING"? IS SHE SAFE?

-I'M FINE! WHAT ABOUT THE KIDS?
I'LL FIND THEM. I ALWAYS DO.
I'LL GRAB THE NEXT FLIGHT HOME. I CAN BE THERE BY-
NO! YOU STAY PUT.
THE SECRET SERVICE WILL PROTECT YOU UNTIL I CAN GET TO THE BOTTOM OF THIS.
IT'S TIMES LIKE THIS THAT MAKE ME REGRET TAKING THIS JOB.
STAY THE COURSE. WE'VE NEVER LET EVIL DETERMINE OUR DESTINATION AND WE'RE NOT ABOUT TO START NOW.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
OKAY, WHAT'S OUR NEXT MOVE?

SEVERAL HOURS LATER, UNDER THE STREETS OF MAWITAAN.
KALASHNIKOV. IT'S PRETTY STANDARD. THE GUN, BY ITSELF WOULD BE NEARLY IMPOSSIBLE TO TRACE.
THERE MUST BE A FEW MILLION OF THEM IN AFRICA. THEY'RE LIKE STATUS SYMBOLS FOR BAD GUYS... EVERYONE HAS TO HAVE ONE.
SO, THIS IS A DEAD END?
I DIDN'T SAY THAT.
THESE AREN'T JUST RUN OF THE MILL ROUNDS. THESE ARE RELOADS.
AND, SOMEHOW, *THAT* SHOULD NARROW IT DOWN.
EXACTLY.
THERE ARE ONLY A HANDFUL OF WAYS TO RELOAD THESE. NOT SURE WHY THEY'D BOTHER, UNLESS-

"UNLESS" WHAT?
YEAH, THAT MAKES SENSE...
WHAT?
IF YOU HAD A LOT, AND I MEAN A WHOLE LOT, OF EMPTY SHELL CASINGS, IT MIGHT BE WORTH IT TO RELOAD YOUR ROUNDS INSTEAD OF BUYING MORE AMMO.
WHY WOULD YOU HAVE LOTS OF EMPTY CASINGS?
UNLESS YOU WERE TRAINING...
AND, TAKE THAT THOUGHT TO THE NEXT STEP AS YOU DIGEST THIS NEWSFEED.
CLK
KIT-/

THANKS, CHANE. LOOKS LIKE IT'S TIME FOR ME TO VISIT AN OLD FRIEND.
HEY, U-HOW'S MOZZ DOING THESE DAYS?
YOU STILL HAVEN'T GONE TO SEE HIM?
NO HE JUST WON'T UNDERSTAND
YOU'D BE SURPRISED. YOUR GRANDFATHER IS A VERY WISE MAN. AFTER THIS IS OVER, I'LL TAKE YOU TO SEE HIM MYSELF
THANKS, PHANTOM. I OWE YOU ONE
IN THAT CASE, I NEED YOU TO DO SOMETHING FOR ME-

MIDNIGHT. OUTSIDE A VERY FAMILIAR CASTLE.
THE CREEPY FACTOR ON THIS PLACE JUST NEVER STOPS
NOTHING LIKE RETURNING TO THE SCENE OF THE CRIME
ANYBODY HOME?

LOOKS LIKE THEY FORGOT TO PAY THE ELECTRIC BILL.
PRETTY OBVIOUS THE MAID ISN'T HERE ANYMORE, EITHER.
MAYBE SOMEONE IS HERE AFTER ALL.

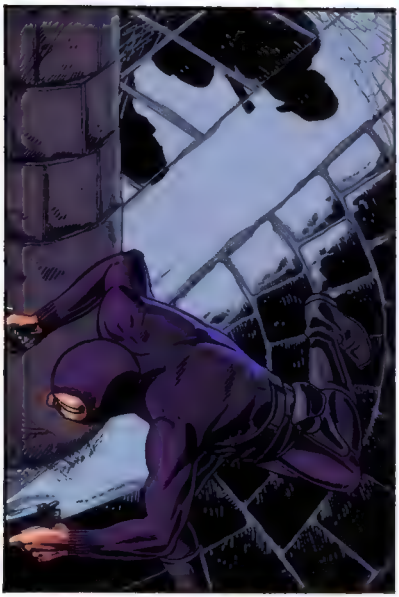
WHAT KIND OF HORROR HOUSE WAS HE RUNNING IN HERE?

RIGHT
-LIKE CHASING A CHEETAH-

YOU'VE GOT TO BE KIDDING ME.
LOOKS LIKE I LOST MY NEW FRIEND, BUT HE HAD TO HAVE LEFT TRACKS IN THE DUST HERE
WELL, THAT RULES OUT A GHOST

THIS MUST BE WHERE ALL THE ACTION HAPPENS

TIME TO PUT THIS CHASE TO AN END



NOWHERE TO GO BUT DOWN. I GUESS.

ONE THING IS FOR SURE-
THIS PLACE CERTAINLY ISN'T DESERTED
LET ME GUESS, KALASHNIKOV'S FULL OF RELOADS?
MOVE A MUSCLE AND YOU DIE, BLASPHEMER
KLIK-KLIK
To Be Continued

BEHIND THE MASK

The Timeline and Change
by Ed Rhoades

There is a major discrepancy in astrology. The Zodiac was created more than 2,000 years ago. In that day and age, if one looked overhead at night on their birthday, they would see the stars that make up their astrological sign. However due to precession, a wobbling of Earth's axis, all the signs have changed to the next sign. I mentioned it to an astrologer once, explaining that in the beginning of my birthday in December, my so called sign, Sagittarius was not overhead. Instead Scorpio was in the sky. I asked why astrologers are using obsolete charts that once accurately depicted the sky two centuries ago. I was told, "We know that. To keep it simple, we say 'You are Sagittarius with Scorpio rising'." It wouldn't instill confidence to tell millions of people that they've been going by the wrong sign all their lives even if it's true. That's why I don't subscribe to astrology.

The Phantom is also affected by a wobble in time, caused by his creator living a long productive life. In all those sci fi/ fantasy stories, the immortal person always says how hard it is to watch those around you grow old. The Phantom as a hero, is not immortal, he succumbs and passes the throne to his son making it appear that he is The Man Who Cannot Die.

The Phantom as a comic strip may not be immortal, but it has seen only the slightest signs of aging and still appeals to millions of readers on a global level. However, alongside The Phantom, in the real world, his creator Lee Falk aged and drew inspiration and influences from all the different eras he experienced.

The Ghost Who Walks fought pirates in the 1930's, Japanese troopers in "The Japanese Invasion" (Feb. 2, 1942) Uranium claim jumpers in the story "UTown" (Feb. 24, 1956) and helped a kidnapped astronaut in one of Sy Barry's earliest stories (Nov 4, 1962.) The Phantom fought a dictator inspired by Idi Amin, and terrorists in the 1990's.

The fact that Lee's stories were responsive to the world around them enriched them, but that combined with Lee's longevity, caused irrevocable damage to the Phantom timeline. How could the 21st Phantom and his wolf Devil and sweetheart Diana fight the Japanese during wartime, yet still be a young in modern times? What's the life expectancy of a wolf anyway?

Lee never intended to break up his popular ensemble which includes the Phantom with Devil, Hero, Diana, Guran, the twins et al. Some comic strips like "For Better or Worse" or "Gasoline Alley" age their characters in real time. Others like "Blondie" freeze their characters in age, but they don't have to answer to serious dedicated fans that spend countless hours trying to work out details, refusing to accept it as a comic when to them, it's an historical document. Phantom fans can be passionate, and there are many trains of thought among them about what is best for the character and what is respectful to Lee Falk's legacy.

When they were looking for someone to succeed Lee in writing the syndicated strip, I made a suggestion to the King Features Comics Editor, the late Jay Kennedy, that they update some of Lee's old stories. For instance, they could retell "Diana Aviatrix Lost," but it would have to be in a flashback to the Phantom's grandfather and his wife, not the current Phantom and Diana. This adjustment would restore some of the timeline making the old stories stand on their own, but giving the current Phantom a perspective with a reasonable age. However, there are various ways it could have been approached. I even suggested making the current Phantom number twenty three and adjust all the stories accordingly.

Ben Raab addressed this by suggesting Sala might have been involved with the current Phantom's father. If she had a grown daughter and the Phantom is about age 30, he could not have been much older than 10 when Sala's daughter was born. If you consider how perilous the life of the Phantom is, it's been suggested (and it's reasonable to assume) that Phantoms generally die young.

Even Lee's theme of a legend of a 400 year old man living in the Deep Woods is closing in on 75 years, if the legend was 400 years old then, is it nearly 500 years old now?

Changing anything that is considered Lee Falk canon isn't something to be taken lightly and would surely be met with protests from fans in online forum discussions. Despite the anachronisms, The Phantom has evolved in a gradual way and continues to be popular on a global level since 1936.

Other later characters, like Superman and Batman, who were inspired by The Phantom, have gone through changes in attitude and costumes many times. The Phantom strip has made adjustments. The main character is no longer a jungle ruler, but an advisor and protector, and the storylines involving natives are less frequent than the presence of modern Africa with doctors and lawyers. The Phantom's environment has grown more complex since the early stories, but the character is pretty much unchanged, same attitude, with the same circle of acquaintances, same costume, same strength, same skull motif. Lee set up a premise over 70 years ago, that still largely holds up. A 'Ghost Who Walks' who lives a life of mystery in the deep jungles in a cave resembling a human skull. I hope his skullcave is far enough away that the Bandar never hear the saws of industrialists harvesting the local wood. Keeping that part of the mystique of the Phantom is important.

So far the official approach has been to keep things vague and ignore discrepancies. When it ain't broke, don't fix it is a rule in the business. Notwithstanding the wedding of the Phantom in 1977, the Phantom has been very conservative and perhaps his resistance to change has been part of his enduring charm. He is low tech. In other situations, a man with untold wealth might find a sat phone or a blackberry useful in fighting crime, but it just isn't what longtime readers of the popular Phantom comic strip have come to expect. In Phantom comic books, some modern issues are permitted to be addressed slightly more than in Phantom comic strips, but deviations from traditional Phantom conventions are closely scrutinized. However, the keepers of the chronicles (King Features Syndicate) understand the importance of new markets. The new SyFy Phantom doesn't change, alter or even address the current Phantom, since it features a storyline where the Phantom in the newspapers is dead and his modern thinking son has taken the mantle. How this will influence what is to happen with The Phantom in other media remains to be seen.

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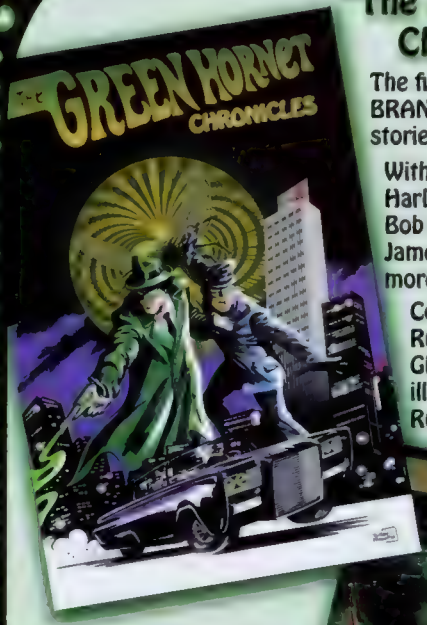

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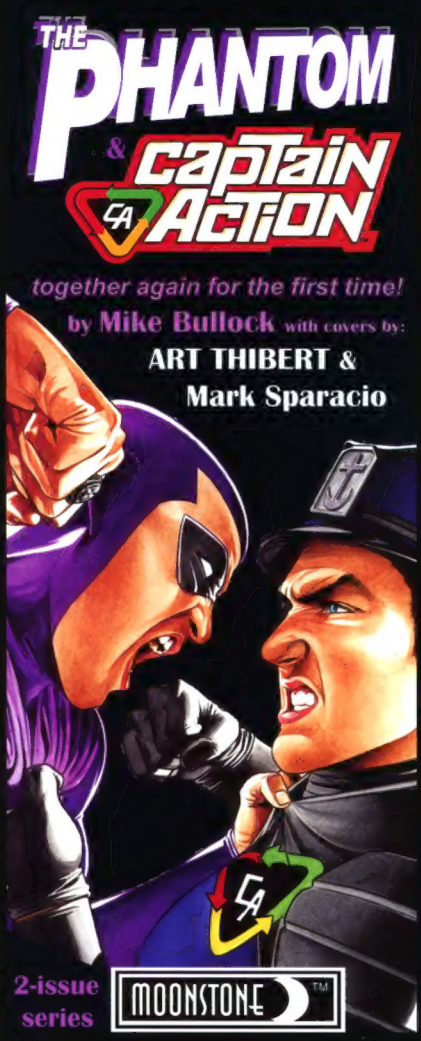

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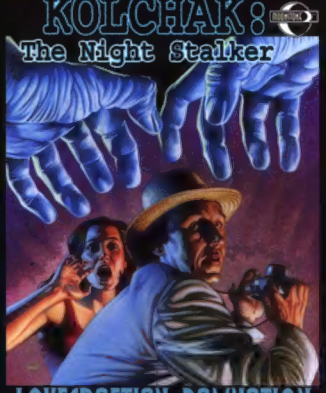

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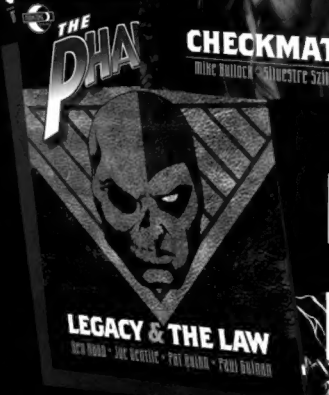

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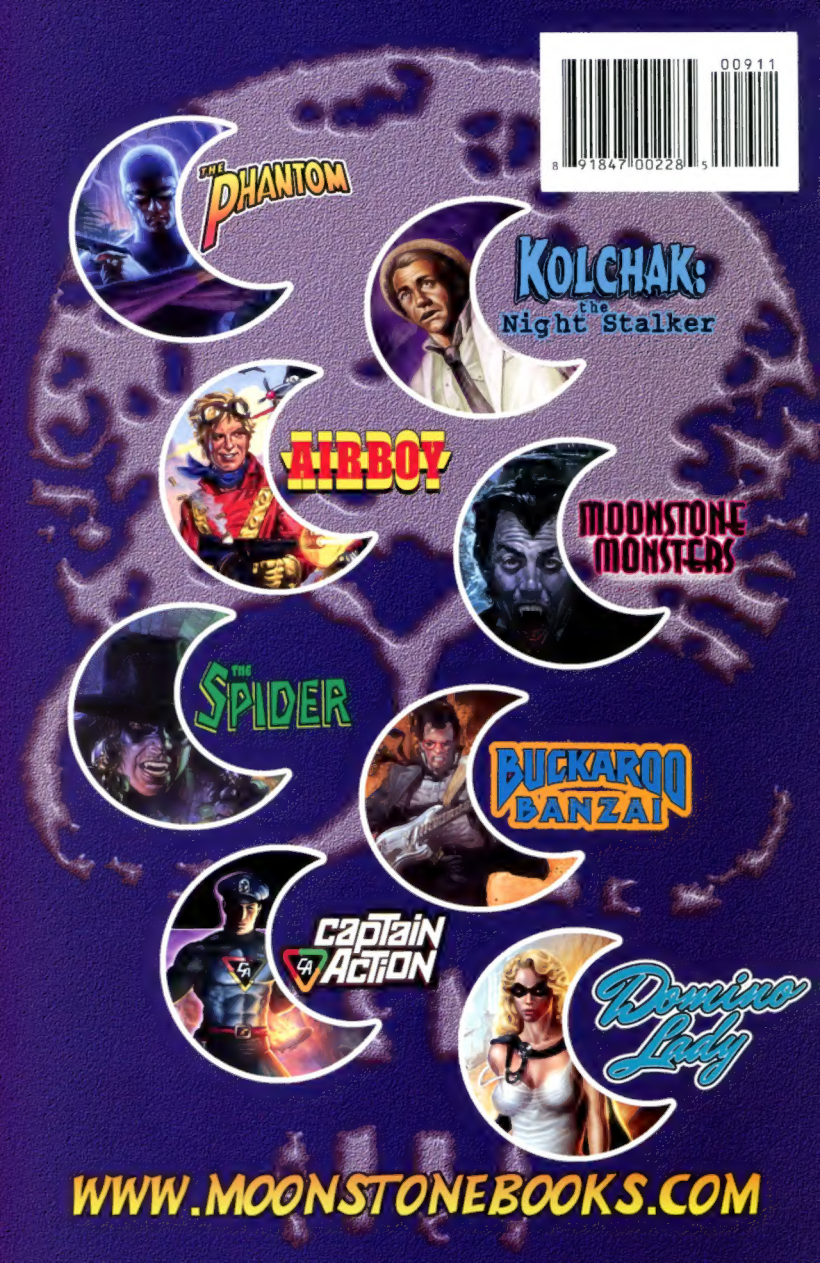
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